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SUBJECT: SAMAKUVA KICKS OFF UNITA'S ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

REF: LUANDA 1049

¶1. (SBU) Summary. On 14 November 2007, UNITA Party President Isaias Samakuva delivered a rousing, wide-ranging speech to kick off UNITA's 2008 electoral cycle. He reached out to those outside his own party, calling for regular elections, a major investment in education, civil service reform and a renewed fight against corruption. In a country with a limited democratic tradition, it will be interesting to watch the development of "retail politics" by the MPLA, UNITA, and Angola's smaller opposition parties. Samakuva's speech was the only presentation by a well-known national figure during Angola's week-long celebration of Independence. President Dos Santos was out of the country. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On 14 November 2007, UNITA Party President Isaias Samakuva, President of the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) kicked off UNITA's 2008 drive toward National Assembly elections (reftel) and a call for 2009 presidential elections during a speech to UNITA members and invited guests. While President Dos Santos has not yet called for legislative elections, most signs indicate he soon will, and Samakuva used his presentation to lay down UNITA's marker in support of the 2008 and 2009 electoral dates.

¶3. (U) During his speech, Samakuva said after 32 years of independence, Angola is in dismal condition as evidenced by statistics on health, infant mortality, and living conditions for most Angolans. He claimed the country silently yearns for a Government of Change that will end intimidation, combat corruption, establish an independent judiciary and fight poverty. Samakuva however, excluded a truth and reconciliation process for Angola. He advised his listeners to leave the past behind, calling all Angolans equally victims, equally guilty.

¶4. (U) Poverty, argued Samakuva, threatens national security and should be reduced through education, health, housing, employment and justice. Samakuva proposed spending as much on education as Angola has on military reform, with 12 years of compulsory education, new school curricula, information technology in education, and higher salaries for teachers. Job placement centers and regional salary differentials will attract employees where their work is needed while vocational training increases the number of skilled workers. Samakuva said UNITA would reduce the number of civil servants and reform the civil and military service, to provide job security, decent wages and adequate pensions. Revising existing laws on national security, preventive detention, and criminal investigation should be the first step to creating an independent judiciary, according to the UNITA leader.

¶5. (U) Samakuva's speech kicked off UNITA's 2008 electoral campaign, in advance of the President's official announcement of an election date. Samakuva advocated that the 2008 elections should be quickly followed in 2009 with Presidential elections, and then by votes for provincial and

local officials. To boisterous applause, Samakuva criticized repeated GRA postponements of legislative elections. He then called for support from Angolans who are not UNITA members, saying independent voters have the judgment to evaluate Angola's situation, and Angola's youth, to use their energy and talents to form a new society. Samakuva advised his audience to be fearless, reminding them voters have overturned dictatorships in other countries, using the ballot box, every voter's secret weapon.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: Samakuva's speech was an attempt to position UNITA as the clear alternative to the status quo of the MPLA government. UNITA's attempt to distance itself from the Government of National Unity and appeal to young and independent voters was also noteworthy. Samakuva's presentation, given just after Angola's Independence Day celebration, offered a stark contrast to the failure of President Dos Santos to appear at any event commemorating the holiday (he was out of the country at the time). While the private weeklies took note of Samakuva's speech, the official media gave the speech one minute on that evening's news.  
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